

Introduction to Estate Inventories in ArkivDigital

Introduction

The estate inventory records provide both genealogical information as well as information that will help you gain a deeper understanding of your ancestor's life. The estate inventory is a detailed listing of all the assets and debts for the deceased person.

Historical Background

Legislation was enacted in 1734 that required an estate inventory be taken after one's death and registered with the court. In many cases where the deceased had little or no assets, no inventory was performed. In some cases of married couples, the inventory was only performed for one spouse but it was required before the surviving spouse remarried. In cases where the deceased had no assets, a relative may have applied for the waiver of the performance of the estate inventory. In these cases, a certificate of poverty or *fattigbevis* was issued. In ArkivDigital, you will find certificates of poverty (*fattigbevis*) for Stockholm City.

Process

Upon the death of an individual, the parish minister recorded the death and burial in the church book. The surviving spouse or heirs would request that an estate inventory be performed. Then on an assigned date, the heirs along with court appointed appraisers (*värderingsmän*) would meet at the deceased's house and conduct an inventory of the estate and assign a value to all items in the estate so it could be properly divided among the heirs. The inventory would be submitted to the court for probate. The court then determined the distribution of the estate and this was recorded in a document called the "*arvskifte*".

The probate was performed by the *häradsrätt* (district court) for rural parishes and *rådhusrätt* (city court) for city parishes. For persons belonging to the nobility, the probate was conducted by the Court of Appeals between 1737 and 1916.

Estate Inventories in ArkivDigital

1. Original estate inventories are kept in the respective provincial archives.
2. In ArkivDigital online estate inventories for all of Sweden from earliest times to 1900 (exception Jämtland County only to 1860). Photographing in progress for estate inventories between 1901 and 1960 for all counties. Estate inventories in Gotland except for Visby are available up to 1979.
3. Estate inventories for nobility up to 1916 on ArkivDigital online.
4. Certificates of poverty for Stockholm (1788-1933).

Search for Estate Inventory Records in ArkivDigital

To search for the estate inventory for a deceased person, you will need to know the parish where the death is registered and the date of death. In this example, we will search for the estate inventory for Sara Larsdotter who died on October 1, 1872 in Fröderyd parish.

1. Open ArkivDigital Online.
2. Search for Fröderyd parish.
3. Search for death record in death book that contains year 1872.

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4. Review the death record.
5. Search for the estate inventory record.
 - a. You need to know the “*härad*” or district that that parish belongs to in order to locate the estate inventory record. In ArkivDigital, you will find the “*härad*” in the “info box” for the parish. Also, the estate inventories for a parish are referred to in the parish archive.
6. Click on “Estate Inventories”.
7. Check to see if an “Estate Inventory register” exists.
 - a. Estate inventory registers are name indexes for the inventories. The names are listed in alphabetical order. Search for the deceased person. You will find the estate inventory volume number and page number where you can find the deceased’s estate inventory. In this case, the index states that you can find Sara Larsdotter’s estate inventory in volume FI:50 on page 2019.
8. Go to the estate inventory (FI:50) and go to page 2019.
9. If there is no index, you will need to browse the estate inventory page by page. Usually the estate inventory was performed within three or four months of the death but in some cases it may have occurred even a year later. Look for the estate inventory that includes the death year for the deceased and then locate the estate inventories beginning at the death date and go forward.

Estate Inventory Contents

The estate inventory is divided into the following sections: *ingress* or preamble, the inventory and a signature page. The ***ingress* or preamble** provides information about the deceased and the heirs. The types of information, you will usually find include:

- Date the estate inventory was performed
- Deceased’s name and place of residence
- Deceased’s date of death
- Names of heirs
- Names of guardians for children not of legal age and for heirs who may be living in another country
- Names of the daughters’ spouses

The **inventory** includes all the deceased’s assets and debts with a value assigned to each item. These are usually arranged in categories with property such as land, houses, cash, bank accounts listed first followed by other categories such as copper, wooden items, tin items, porcelain, bed clothing, furniture, the deceased’s clothing, animals, tools, and miscellaneous items. At the end are amounts due to the deceased (*fordingar*) and debts (*skulder*). Often the deceased owed people money and other people owed him/her money. It is wise to study the names in these lists because they may be relatives and often might be helping in solving genealogical mysteries.

The signature page includes the signatures of the family members, guardians and appraisers who were present at the estate. Often here, you will be able to see an ancestor’s signature. The lead person conducting the inventory such as the spouse of the deceased will state under oath that to his/her knowledge everything in the listed and nothing has been hidden.

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Preamble Example (Transcription and Translation)

År 1872 den 15 November på begäran Laga bouppteckning forrättad i *Esprilla Södergård* efter *aflidna Hustrun Sara Larsdotter* derstädes *some* *aflid* den 1 oktober *sistlidene*, och efter sig lämnat såsom *arfvingar sin kära maka nu mera Enkomannen Peter Johansson August*, och med *sett första äktenskap 2ne barn, sonen Johan*, som *troligen vistas i Norra America* *hvars rätt bevakades at hans gödman Samuel Nilsson in wasEsprilla Westergård*, och *Dottern Charlotta gift med Korporalen J.A. Kron i Hökhult Assaregård* var tillstädes, Enkomannen uppmanades, att uppgifva Egendomen såden den wid den aflidnas befans och företogs i följande ordning.

On the 15th of November 1872, an estate inventory was performed at Esprilla Södergård for the deceased wife Sara Larsdotter who died on October 1 and is survived by her dear spouse now Widower Peter Johansson August and from her first marriage two children, son Johan who is probably living in North America whose rights are being protected by the good man Samuel Nilsson from Esprilla Westergård and a daughter, Charlotta, who is married to Corporal J. A. Kron from Hökhult Assaregård who was present. The widower was summoned to account for the estate or property which follows:

Västra häradsrätt (F) FI:50 (1870-1872) Image 1022 / page 2019 (AID: v78036.b1022.s2019, NAD: SE/VALA/01635)

Name registers for estate inventories in estate inventory volume

Some estate inventory volumes contain a name index in the front of the book. This is the case with the estate inventory volume FI:18 found in the *Orust and Tjörns häradsrätt* archive. In this volume, you will find a number of name registers and there is a register for each court (*ting*) session that the volume covers.

In volume FI:19 for the same district court (*häradsrätt*), there is one name register for all the court sessions that the volume covers. The register is on page 1 with the following heading:

"Register öfver bouppteckningar, som inregistrerats vid Orusts och Tjörns häradsrätt under åren 1854-1856 efter följande aflidna personer".

Register of estate inventories, which were registered at Orust and Tjörn district court during the years 1854-1856 for the following deceased persons.

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Certificate of Poverty (*Fattigbevis*)

For individuals who didn't have any assets at the time of their death to cover the costs of performing an estate inventory or *bouppteckning*, the surviving relatives would submit a certificate of poverty (*fattigbevis*) to the court for approval.

The certificate of poverty (*fattigbevis*) was an application by a deceased's surviving relative requesting to waive the performance of the estate inventory (*bouppteckning*) because the deceased's estate was of little value or worthless. This certificate has genealogical value because it usually lists the immediate relatives. The certificate of poverty usually contains the following:

- Information about the deceased – name, birth and death dates
- Names of immediate surviving relatives
- Statement requesting waiver of estate inventory (*bouppteckning*)
- Signatures of applicant and witnesses

You will find these certificates of poverty (*fattigbevis*) for Stockholm for the years of 1756 to 1933 in ArkivDigital. Name indexes for these records between 1788 and 1930 are in the following volumes:

- Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning EIIId:49 (1788-1860) – Fattigbevis
- Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning EIIId:50 (1861-1910) – Fattigbevis
- Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning EIIId:51 (1911-1925) – Fattigbevis
- Stockholms rådhusrätt, bouppteckningsavd D3:1 (1926-1930) – Fattigbevis

We will search for the certificate of poverty for Jonas Sundgren who died May 11, 1899 in Stockholm. To directly search for a certificate of poverty (*fattigbevis*) in the Stockholm's district court archive (*häradsrätt*), do the following:

1. Access ArkivDigital online.
2. Select county type.
3. Select Stockholm stad
4. Select Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning archive.
5. In the volume list, you will find the *fattigbevis* and *register till fattigbevis*.
6. Search for person in *register till fattigbevis. 186-1910*.
7. Search for the "B" section and then year 1899
8. You will find an entry for Jonas Sundgren at the following page Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning (AB, A) EIIId:50 (1861-1910) Image 1980.
9. The entry refers to the volume 1899 norra trakten (part) and page 40.
10. Go to volume EIIId:29b for the year 1899 Norra trakten.
11. Open book and go to page 40 Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning (AB, A) EIIId:29b (1899-1899) Image 460 / page 40.

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Additional Resources

ArkivDigital Swedish Genealogy Tutorials

- Introduction to Swedish Estate Inventories
 - <http://www.arkivdigital.net/swedish-genealogy/swedish-estate-inventories>
- Introduction to certificates of poverty (*fattigbevis*)
 - <http://www.arkivdigital.net/swedish-genealogy/fattigbevis>

Online Swedish/English dictionaries

- Swedish Genealogy guide 1788 and 1814 Swedish/English dictionaries
 - <http://swedishgenealogyguide.com/>
- Good Swedish-English dictionary focused on terms found both in introductory and inventory list sections.
 - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~swewgw/Fact/Dict/facdic_bou.htm

Family Search Wiki

- Excellent resource and new information is added continually. Site contains Swedish-English dictionary of many of the objects included in the inventory list.
 - https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Sweden:_Probate_Records

Sandin family site

- Very helpful site that includes transcriptions and translations of estate inventory registers as well as a pictorial dictionary of objects found in the inventories.
 - <http://www.sandinfamily.com/genealogy-resources/bp-xlat-intro.htm>

Reference Books and Journals

Clemensson, Per and Kjell Andersson. *Släktforska Steg för Steg*. Fallköping: Elanders Gummessons, 2003.

Johansson, Carl-Erik. *Cradled in Sweden*. Sandy, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2002.

Johansson, Ewa. *Släktforskningens Mysterium Lärobok i släktforskning*. Kristianstad: Kristianstads Boktryckeri AB, 2009.

Lagerqvist, Lars O. *Vad Kostade Det?* Lund, Sweden: Historiska Media, 2011.

Ågren, Maria. *Domestic Secrets Women & Property in Sweden, 1600-1857*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

“Handwriting Example XIV”, *Swedish American Genealogist*, Volume XXVII (June 2007 No. 2), page 11 and 24.

“Handwriting Example”, *Swedish American Genealogist*, Volume XXXII (September 2012 No. 3), page 4 and 22.

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Common Words in Estate Inventory Preamble

<i>SWEDISH</i>	<i>ENGLISH</i>
Aflidit (Avlidit)	Died
Arvinge	Heir
Bevaka	Secure, often used to protect rights of minor or heir living in another country
Boet	Estate
Bouppteckning	Estate Inventory
Edlig förpliktelse	Holy oath
Efterlämnat	Left behind, survived by
Förmyndare	Legal guardian
Förrättades	(was) performed
Myndig	Of legal age
Omyndig	Minor
Protokollet	Record, minutes
Sistlidne	Last
Sterbhuset (stärbhuset)	Estate
Värderingsman	Appraiser

Common Words in Inventory Section

<i>SWEDISH</i>	<i>ENGLISH</i>
Bleck	Tin
Contant (Kontant)	Cash
Fastighet	Real Estate
Fordringar	Amounts owed to the deceased
Gångkläder	Everyday clothing
Guld	Gold
Jern (Järn)	Iron
Kläder	Clothing
Koppar	Copper
Kreatur	Animal
Körredskap	Driving Gear
Linne	Linen
Mässing	Marble
Möbler	Furniture
Porslin	Porcelain
Redskap	Tools
Skulder	Debts, Amounts owed by deceased
Sängkläder	Bedding
Tenn	Pewter
Tillgångar	Assets
Transport	To carry forward, as in addition, from one page to the next